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OLC 72-1204

18 December 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Senator Stuart Symington  
Regarding the Director's Retirement

1. This afternoon Senator Symington called to ask if the stories were true about the Director's retirement. I said apparently it was true that he would be retiring before too long, but I didn't know the details regarding timing and so forth--that thus far the White House had not made any official pronouncements on the subject. I pointed out that the Director would be 60 in a few months and there had been a general policy in the Agency calling for retirement at age 60. Senator Symington asked how old Mr. McCone and Mr. Dulles were when they retired. I said they had both been over 60. Symington said that therefore talk of a policy of retirement at 60 was "crap." I said it was quite true that the policy had not been applied to McCone and Dulles, but it was nevertheless the policy for career employees and Mr. Helms was indeed a career officer.

2. Senator Symington said he had just been looking at something from the Congressional Record of 23 November 1971, and he quoted his own remarks there when he complained that the CIA Subcommittee had not met for over a year and that congressional oversight of CIA had been grossly inadequate. He went on to say the only reason this situation had been tolerated was because of the respect which the Congress had for Mr. Helms, who had always been completely "the soul of honor" when he appeared before congressional committees and whose intelligence assessments had proved far more accurate than those of other Government agencies. He said if Mr. Helms left "it will change a lot of things around here."

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He said we could be an Agency that operated with integrity, or one that would carry out other people's wishes regardless of the facts. He said thus far we had always operated with integrity and I said we would try to keep it that way. I added I had known and worked with Mr. Helms for 25 years and all of us who had known him would sorely miss him, but we would try to carry on the same policies of "telling it straight" which he always insisted upon. I said if we found this wasn't possible, the Senator would be sure to hear from us. The Senator said if I find out anything to drop by and say hello.

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JOHN M. MAURY  
Legislative Counsel

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